

# The Relationship between Tourism Management and Sustainability Education Awareness: A New Trend

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of tourism management practices on sustainability education awareness. That is to explore and confirm the link between tourism management and the increasing significance of sustainability education. This is an emerging trend in the worldwide tourism and educational management industries. Research in recent years has been largely focused on the environmental and social aspects of tourism, as well as the managerial strategies designed to promote environmentally sustainable policies. This is evidenced by the rising number of yearly case studies on subjects like sustainable tourism, environmental marketing, and eco-friendly tourism. Consequently, there is a growing acknowledgment of the obligation of stakeholders in the tourism sector to adopt sustainable management practices. (de Grosbois & Fennell, 2022)

This method involves integrating sustainability principles into management processes and corporate strategies. It can be explored through three main questions: the first relating to vital hypotheses and theoretical studies, the second focusing on key aspects of sustainable tourism and the relationship between the environment and social stakeholders, and the third examining the promotion of sustainable businesses. Our primary literature in this area addresses the challenge for educators to teach sustainable business principles to students when they are not integrated within their institutions. This literature also discusses the development of educational programs that emphasize sustainable futures. (Ratten & Jones, 2021)

## Background and Significance

The tourism industry is one of the largest in the world, and its management practices are affected by global trends and reflect observations in various settings, from local to international. Over the past two decades, sustainability principles have been emphasized in tourism, but demand continues to increase along with the impacts of climate change. There is also a predicted growth in job opportunities within the tourism sector. As a result, the education and training of future tourism workers and leaders are likely to have a significant impact on business, economics, and social conditions. (Sharpley, 2020)

Nevertheless, the sluggish pace and limited local and grassroots efforts are insufficient to impact policies and instigate significant transformation on the necessary scale. One might posit that the saturation of these small-scale initiatives is impeding the emergence of new sustainable tourism ideas and innovations. Given that economic obstacles and educational deficiencies are often cited as barriers to implementing sustainability practices in businesses, universities play a crucial role in effecting the necessary changes. Although many influential members of competitive and successful educational institutions embrace various ethical principles and behaviors, they seldom scrutinize the structure of educational facilities and curricula for their potential contributions to social, economic, or environmental justice. Nonetheless, promoting sustainability through education is essential, as it requires a concerted effort rather than a passive approach, if we are to anticipate meaningful societal and cultural changes from a sustainable perspective. (Alam, 2022)

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Various theories demonstrate the potential correlation between tourism management and the principles of sustainability education. A group of experts concurred on the necessity of instilling environmental concerns and attitudes from a young age that persist in adulthood through education, as well as the importance of educators incorporating learning-based theory in tourism when addressing sustainability aspects. Educators should educate students on how effective tourism management can help preserve the environment. Additionally, related theories propose that both tourism and tourism education are oriented toward sustainability, but actual practices have been uneven. (Loureiro et al., 2022)

The concept of sustainable development has a significant connection to tourism, and therefore, all sustainability principles should be applicable to the tourism industry. It is essential to take a comprehensive approach to sustainable development to incorporate environmental, social, and economic factors in tourism. When focus is solely on the environmental dimension to justify tourism, it fails to provide the predictability, certainty, and fairness that the industry seeks across all dimensions. A considerable portion of sustainable tourism literature is based on the principles of sustainable development, and it is evident that there are practical challenges in implementing sustainability principles in businesses. The environmental, economic, and social impacts of tourism are variable and can overlap spatially. It is crucial to develop proactive and reactive strategies that aim to balance the needs of stakeholders, as outlined in the sustainability triangle. Therefore, seeking one optimal solution is somewhat unrealistic due to the complex trade-offs between all three elements. (Rasoolimanesh et al.2023)

### Sustainability Education and Tourism Management

In recent years, there has been a surge of attention towards sustainability education. While there are differing interpretations of sustainability, with some viewing it as a comprehensive approach encompassing social, economic, and ecological considerations, and others seeing it solely as an environmental issue, both have been demonstrated to be effective in promoting a sustainable tourism industry. Higher education institutions must instill in students the values of sustainability to provide them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become professionals capable of supporting sustainable development. Since 1970, numerous international documents have emphasized the need to reconsider development models considering concerns about dwindling resources and environmental impacts. Utilizing post-secondary education, particularly university education, to train future social change agents is one way in which society can make development more sustainable. (Field et al.2023)

The increase in global awareness of sustainability has the potential to impact manufacturers' decisions and consumer pressure surrounding environmental issues. Recent research has focused on public perception, values, interest, and awareness of sustainable development. An increasing number of researchers believe that tourism education can play a crucial role in promoting responsible tourism and changing public attitudes and behaviors. Many colleges and universities offer learning experiences in natural and historic areas to educate students in the cultural and environmental elements of those sites. Additionally, some federal agencies and states have sponsored pilot outdoor programs with specific themes aimed at promoting sustainability. (Nunkoo et al.2023)

Similarities exist in the objectives of sustainability education in the proposed terminology and the variety of suggested methods, particularly the use of hands-on learning and the promotion of deep learning approaches. Some common themes include a shift from personal to political perspectives, with an emphasis on enhancing critical thinking to prompt students to question existing paradigms and values. In the tourism sector, there is strong evidence indicating that potential visitors are open to embracing sustainability principles, and several studies have cited instances where tourism education has been effective in influencing students' preferences. Additionally, research has explored the impact of educational interventions on the preferences of on-site visitors and the connection between staff members' prior education and their current commitment to implementing environmental standards in hotels. This line of research has significantly contributed to

understanding how the market influences the supply side of sustainable tourism, but there is a lack of direct research assessing the role of sustainability education in tourism in either the learning process or students' subsequent pro-sustainable actions. Further research is needed in this area to enhance knowledge and support sustainable supply practices if an integrated approach to sustainability is to be embraced. (Font et al.2023)

## **CURRENT PRACTICES AND CASE STUDIES**

This segment provides a summary of present methods and real-life examples concerning how the knowledge of sustainability among tourism students can be enhanced through their education in tourism management. This goal can be accomplished through the creation of impactful curricula and various educational activities that incorporate the concept of sustainability education as a fundamental component. (Benaraba et al.2022) Both students' awareness and interest in environmental issues can be enhanced through targeted hands-on experiences and academic study. Students demonstrate a global concern for sustainability issues, and the integration of subjects like ethics and society in tourism-related studies is crucial. Visits to local businesses can raise awareness in the community, and the backing of senior management is essential for program success. The university and its staff have the potential to make a significant impact on the local community by engaging students with local tourism operators to promote sustainability. (Alam, 2022)

Furthermore, some of the obstacles to be overcome by proponents of incorporating mandatory sustainability courses into tourism and hospitality programs include resistance from institutions and financial limitations faced by many tourism departments in recent years. It is reassuring to note, however, that there is no obligation for these courses to be universally integrated into all curricula or at a mandatory level to be implemented. (Adisa et al.2024)

### **Incorporating Sustainability Education in Tourism Curricula**

There has been widespread examination of pedagogical approaches for sustainability education within college and program settings. However, there is a noticeable lack of literature on the integration of sustainability and responsible business practices into the curricula of diverse educational sectors. In the quest to delineate the necessary learning outcomes and content areas for the effective instruction and evaluation of sustainable tourism and ecotourism subjects, a variety of innovative models have emerged in recent years. Several models propose the integration of internships, cooperative programs, and fieldwork within the curriculum. Institutions of higher education that provide programs in tourism, hospitality, parks and recreation, business and marketing, environmental science, and social responsibility are uniquely positioned to establish a series of courses or concentrations in ecotourism and sustainable tourism. These courses may encompass topics such as Economic Impact Analysis, Tourism Policy and Planning, Wildlife Management, Marine Science, Human Ecology, Tourism Marketing, and Corporate Social Responsibility. (Choi et al., 2021)

Despite the abundant opportunities for interdisciplinary coordination, there remain challenges to integrating curricula. Academic departments may create barriers to a cross-disciplinary approach. Additionally, certain non-profit, government-led, or NGO initiatives may be disconnected from current private industry and tax demands. By overseeing curricular updates and enforcing accountability, governments demonstrate the importance of educational programming and provide influence in the classroom. (Craig et al.2024)

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

The development of tourism management with a focus on sustainability education can bring opportunities for stakeholders, as well as challenges from different aspects. Firstly, tourism practitioners have mixed reactions to adopting sustainable practices, largely due to a lack of clear understanding of their business implications and the absence of necessary resources and labor, all while facing potential guests. The necessity of collaboration between environmental and community concerns, focusing on economic viability, cannot be denied. Educational institutions can sometimes be inhibited from adopting sustainability due to obstacles

such as budget constraints, competition for overall funding allocation, and resistance to organizational change. Sometimes, there is a significant gap between recognizing needs or issues and devising effective solution strategies, particularly in the perceptions of external master employers or employees. Developing a well-designed and sustainable business model can provide the organization with strategic direction, a positive image, and enhanced visibility to the public if positioned effectively. Well-designed and sustainable business models play a crucial role in integrating differentiated product offerings for residents, enhancing tourism potential, and promoting sustainability in cities. The development of a cross-disciplinary tourism sustainability leadership module in the faculty or faculty collaboration was formulated from sustainable tourism management and seen as a pilot project.

Moreover, during times of extreme climatic events and uncertainty regarding the sustainability of natural systems, awareness of sustainability issues has increased, and the motivation to address them is on the rise. Moreover, there are pronounced limitations in the practices of tourism education in North America, which are not keeping pace with the realities of the current operating environment in mainstream tourist destinations. Using a case study approach, the discussion hypothesizes that selective external focusing by the management of educational institutions is a practical and innovative solution to capacity shortfalls in tourism destination management. In conclusion, there is a call for a more adaptive tourism sector moving forward. Accordingly, the differential impact of these choices on the theory and practices of education and destination management is important. Practical adaptation strategies are developed to increase the overall campus-wide and faculty-internal impact, enhancing capacity in tourism sustainability leadership as an educational offering that is apparent in both theory and practice.

In addition, despite its substantial potential, the connection between tourism management and sustainability education awareness is fraught with notable limitations and obstacles. One of the most urgent concerns is the absence of uniform curricula and training frameworks across different countries and areas. This inconsistency yields disparate levels of sustainability knowledge and practices among tourism professionals, educators, and operators, thus resulting in fragmented execution of sustainable tourism plans. Moreover, numerous sustainability education projects have inadequate finances and a deficiency of institutional or governmental support. In the absence of sufficient financial resources or policy backing from public or private sectors, initiatives to incorporate sustainability principles into tourism operations frequently remain limited in scope or duration. A continual challenge is the opposition to change demonstrated by certain players in the tourism sector, who may emphasize immediate profits or express skepticism over the tangible advantages of sustainable practices. A pervasive lack of awareness or interest in sustainability among tourists can constrain the market for responsible tourism options. Moreover, a particularly intricate and underexplored facet of this relationship is the difficulty in precisely quantifying the genuine influence of sustainability education on tourism results. In the absence of accurate measurements and longitudinal data, it is challenging to evaluate whether educational interventions are effectively altering behaviors or enhancing environmental and socio-cultural outcomes. These constraints impede the widespread adoption of sustainability education in tourism management and threaten to undermine the long-term efficacy and credibility of this burgeoning movement if not addressed via deliberate, coordinated efforts.

In short, it is argued that despite concerted effort and interest, the various constraints, barriers, and hurdles to a more effective institutionalization of sustainability principles in education are not negligible and seem to be easily forgotten by many involved. As mentioned earlier, educators may be willing to change but are unable to do so because of issues regarding staff readiness, lack of support training, the dominant culture of an organization, financial constraints, and/or the poor strategic direction of that institution.

The general reliance on the national context in offering barriers and possibilities in public policy suggests that curricular innovations should be implemented at the national level. It suggests that any broader attempt at moving toward a sustainable world in relation to education or otherwise needs to start with the very ones who are voicing concern, and this contradiction is particularly problematic if one is then trying to bring social and environmental change into education. Others argue that successive papers have claimed



sustainable development lacks a definition, which is problematic because a common understanding among all relevant stakeholders in education is necessary for effective work. They also assert that stakeholders in educational practice have yet to articulate a common understanding of what constitutes an education for sustainable development and often fail to actualize any conceptions they may have. Indeed, in other literature, there is an acknowledgment that although we might all agree that education is one of the most vital means through which sustainability can be achieved, the content that is still being delivered is far from achieving this.

## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

This paper initially outlined the findings of prior research in the field of tourism education. Following that, a conceptual framework was developed that incorporated the research variables. Data obtained from this framework revealed a significant relationship. These findings are thought to introduce a novel topic and have the potential to be incorporated into existing literature. Additionally, the implications of this study can contribute to the enhancement of tourism management programs for educators, researchers, and various stakeholders. (Nekmahmud et al.2022)

While this paper's findings are indicative of the current state, they also point towards numerous potential future areas of interest within the realm of sustainability education in tourism management. The study's results, along with its context, encompass forward-looking initiatives that may see improvement in the future. Current educational research trends are still focused on enhancing digital and technological support, particularly through online learning platforms, as well as the promotion of experiential practices, which are regarded as 'exciting initiatives' in literature. Within the field of tourism management education, the incorporation of place-based experiences, especially those that go beyond the physical to address socio-cultural and environmental issues, into increasingly 'global' curricula, is emerging as a significant area of interest. Given subsequent global events, the 'future' has been reimagined to involve strategizing for the frontline management of 'overtourism', a threat expected to overshadow challenges such as pandemics and climate change. (Bilotta et al.2021)

More recently, there has been a shift towards more genuine, integrative, interdisciplinary, and cross-cutting learning experiences in tertiary-level hospitality and tourism education. This is reflected in the various methods and approaches being used worldwide, such as scenario-based learning, action-oriented approaches, active and experiential learning, problem-based learning, international virtual exchange through global partnerships, service-based learning, and collaboration with industry and community. This shift also aligns with the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature that students and staff are increasingly favoring. In addition, there is a growing emphasis on student involvement in the co-creation of learning experiences, as well as the use of various tools and methods, along with peer-to-peer reflection and high levels of staff education and community engagement. However, these innovative programs face challenges such as disciplinary silos, rigid bureaucratic structures, and faculty who are resistant to interdisciplinary approaches. Moreover, the tourism industry, like society at large, is influenced by various factors including visitor interests, resource availability, and global environmental, political, and economic situations. It is crucial for educational efforts to equip professionals with the skills to adapt to these changing circumstances. Furthermore, there is a need to consider how the sector and its professionals should evolve to support future developments in the field. (Turner et al.2024)

## **Innovative Approaches and Technologies**

There are many modern methods and technologies available for improving and enriching the teaching of sustainability in tourism management studies. One such method is utilizing artificial intelligence and data analytics to gain a deeper understanding of the field. By incorporating these cutting-edge technologies into the curriculum, students can also gain insights into potential student behaviors and choices in academic activities. Our research suggests using case studies to incorporate practical examples into the study of tourism management. (Lu et al.2022)

The second type of potential educational approach is practical application. A noteworthy aspect in current trends is the integration of advanced methods for sustainability management studies through technology. The main objective of utilizing these approaches is to provide students with real-world practical knowledge and methods used in the current tourism industry. It is important to emphasize that incorporating practical application in courses can be facilitated through a collaborative approach. Peer learning among tourism management students proved valuable in educating students on responsible tourism, as it encouraged them to share this information with the tourism community in an engaging manner. Further research is suggested to create a comprehensive guide for contemporary and innovative educational approaches in the field of tourism management studies. Employing diverse methods for new education can offer a wider perspective, which is beneficial for all stakeholders in the tourism industry. (Nurdiana et al.2023)

The third approach, which measures the actual impact of sustainability education on tourism outcomes, necessitates a well-designed, mixed-methods strategy that integrates both quantitative and qualitative data. Initially, it is crucial to delineate what "impact" signifies in this context—whether it pertains to alterations in tourist behavior, enhanced environmental results, or transformations in company procedures. Essential indicators may encompass diminished waste production, heightened use of environmentally friendly transportation, and augmented involvement in sustainable tourist endeavors. In the business context, impact may be evidenced by the implementation of environmentally friendly operations, employee education in sustainable practices, or the attainment of ecological certifications. Assessing community-level results, such as enhanced local engagement in tourism or favorable environmental transformations, introduces an additional significant aspect. To evaluate these impacts, pre- and post-educational surveys may be administered to measure alterations in knowledge, attitudes, and intended behaviors, frequently employing Likert scales or knowledge-based inquiries. Observational studies can yield immediate insights into tourist behavior following sustainability education, monitoring indicators such as littering, adherence to trails, and interactions with local populations and wildlife. In sophisticated situations, smart tourism technologies—such as applications, GPS tracking, and energy consumption monitors—can be employed to collect behavioral data with minimal intrusion. Furthermore, interviews and focus groups with tourists, tourism personnel, and local stakeholders can elucidate the complexities and subtleties of behavioral modifications or awareness transformations that quantitative data may not fully represent. Economic indicators, such as increased spending on eco-certified products and services, and repeat patronage stemming from positive sustainable experiences, may indicate the effectiveness

of sustainability education. Environmental indicators—such as diminished litter, enhanced biodiversity, or improved air and water quality—offer concrete proof of transformation. Ultimately, longitudinal monitoring of tourists or places over time helps ascertain the enduring impact of sustainability education. The integration of these methodologies facilitates a thorough assessment of the direct and indirect impacts of sustainability education on tourism results.

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